

[Medieval Georgia]

THE INSTITUTION OF PATRONQMOBA

thee, Vaché Guaramisdze, and grant thee subsistence . . . *samamulot* 566
to serve the Church. . . . We have listened to thy supplication and 423
grant *samamulot* to thee Vaché Guaramisdze, our *Msakburt-Ukhtsuri* 571
and thy sons and descendants, the village of Oromasheni in return
for services (*samsakbured*) to the Church."¹

It has already been stated that *shedsqaleba* proved particu- 571
larly beneficial to the high state officials and to the great 647
gvarishvilni and that to them fell the greater part of the benefices. 428
Shedsqaleba enriched the "loyal and obedient" *gvariani* officials.
From the works of the Historians of David Aghmashenebeli
and Queen Tamara we learn that in the twelfth century, especi-
ally during the reigns of Giorgi III and his daughter, the over-
generous use of *shedsqaleba* on the part of the kings, made it
possible for an enormous amount of wealth both movable and
immovable to accumulate in the hands of the *didebulni* and
shedsqalebuni, rendering them owners of immense estates and
of numerous *qmani*.

In order to curb the power of the grasping and unruly
didgvarianni the kings began to follow a policy of replacing
them by persons of *ugvaro* or *uazno* descent who were per-
sonally dependent on the goodwill of the Court. By means of
shedsqaleba the King made strong his "loyal and faithful
servant", enriched him materially and increased the number
of his *qmani*. Thus by the side of the *didgvarianni* officials there
came into existence in each generation a group of *msakbureuli*
shedsqalebuni who, although they lacked the distinction of
birth and the influence of class, were at the same time very
strong, since they had been raised to the patronage of numerous
towns, fortresses and villages. But the over-generous char-
acter of the beneficence shown towards the promoted *ugvaro*
officials and administrators in the end defeated its own pur-
pose; and the system of *shedsqaleba* served to perpetuate those
evils to eradicate which the kings had directed all their energies
and their favours. *Shedsqaleba* gradually raised the new 662 ●
favourites, these *ugvaro* officials, to a position of influence and
power; in course of time it concentrated in their hands new
accumulations of wealth; the administrative positions which
they held gained them a steadily increasing political influence,
and their descendants, finding themselves in the position of
great hereditary land-owners, easily forgot their *uazno* or
ugvaro origins and their indebtedness to the Crown. In these
circumstances their ambitions proved as matchless and their

¹ S. Kakabadze, XIII *Sankunis pirveli makhovris Sakartvelos Katolikussobi* (The Georgian Catholics of the first half of Thirteenth Century).

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THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

- 662 lust for power as arrogant as that of any of the older houses whom they aspired to overshadow, and the thirteenth century saw the renewal and continuance of the struggle between the kings and their clamant feudatories, the former to assert their rule and the latter to resist it.

